24 Sept 74

'to Hébuterne to bury
the Irish dead'

p. 4 dates Tiberius etc

Early K.M. version p. 7

'Stand in' (with little map)
p. 8

Letter 2 / 27 Sept 74

①

Calvary Nursing Home
Sudbury Hill
Harrow-on-the-Hill
Middlesex

Wednesday, September 24th(?) 1974

René annwyl a cyfaill yn wir* – 'Lladin' me that
m' Trinity scholard out of eure Sanskreed into our owre
englysh.

It is meant to be
Welsh for – René
dear and true friend
but I may well
have got it wrong
cyfaill means 'friend'
but after a (and) it
may mutate to –
Gwir means true but
mutates to **wir** after
yn (in) yn wir
really is the same
as 'truly' or
'in truth' in English

I was so pleased to get yr letter on Monday morn
with ~~yr wonderful article in~~ New Blackfriars. It is
a wonderful article leofa René, remarkably to the
point in all kinds of ways, ~~to~~ & certainly none
but you could have written not by a long
bloody chalk – many, many thanks – I do
hope they paid you properly for it. –

Very glad you spoke as you did of the
fragment from the Bk of Balaam's Ass – for I
included it after much hesitation as a recalling of
that period of the war after I had been
returned to my unit in ~~Oct. 1916~~ late Oct 1916
after my stay in England convalescing from
my ~~[illegible]~~ being ~~wound~~ wounded
on the Somme on July 11th 1916. & found
the battalion were in position north of Ypres
& the ~~[illegible]~~ 'feel' of the front so very different
in all sorts of ways – much more unpleasant
more mechanized of course but with a feeling
that there was an endless repetition with no
foreseeable end – whereas until the Somme
battles there had been a feeling ~~that~~ of
some sort of optimism ~~however~~ foolish.
But the 'Mill' 'on the open plain' does reflect
at least to some extent that later period or
tried to. It is interesting that while in writing
I.P. I could recall with a fair degree
of accuracy the happenings up to July 1916,
I ~~was~~ could only with difficulty recall ~~ing~~ the
events from Oct. 1916 to Feb. 1918 when I
was evacuated to England with a violent
attack of 'Trench ~~[illegible]~~ Fever' –
your mention of the Ulster men ~~celebrating~~
celebrating the Somme battle & that
of Boyne Water on the same day made me
recall that in some early draft of I.P.

as have no map of ~~[illegible]~~ France so cant tell where the place was.

ended with the words 'to Hebutern (cant spell it) to bury the Irish dead'. I cant recall how I came to write these words, but I suppose for some reason I wanted to make a recalling of ~~what facts~~ events subsequent to ~~[illegible]~~ the Division ~~[illegible]~~ or Bde or whatnot being relieved after the capture of ~~[illegible]~~ the Wood, by some ~~other Div~~ other troops on I think the night of July 12th — I was not there for I had been wounded ~~[illegible]~~ sometime ~~after midnight of the~~ round about 2 A.M of July 11th. But Leslie P. who was present & unscathed when the relief took place for I recall how he told ~~Col. Bell~~ me of seeing 'Col. Dell', on foot leading his battalion, somewhat unshaved, and his tunic, breeches & high boots ~~[illegible]~~ naturally showing the mud & chalk of the terrain of battle & marks of the broken greenery of the Wood, & carrying a long ~~stick~~ ash-stick such as were common ~~[illegible]~~ at that date among officers of rank - rather like shepherds crooks without the crook! his face calm if a bit more severe than usual. but otherwise in much the same condition as he was when I had last seen ~~[illegible]~~ him in Queen's Nullah chatting with an old ~~[illegible]~~ friend of days in India.

Leslie P. was evidently impressed - for I remember he said he wished I could have seen him, i.e. Col. Dell.

And I think but cant swear to it, that he, Leslie P., mentioned some fatigue party being detailed to bury the dead of an Irish unit ~~that~~ had suffered very severe loss at the place named. If this was so he must have told me when I returned to the Battalion late in Oct. north of Ypres, for, of course, I had not seen him during the intervening three to four months.

I'm glad that in the New Blackfriars you make the contrast by reference to there being no 'Queen of the Woods' in that later phase — for bare earth & mud, twisted barbed wire hedges, reconcrete 'pill boxes' you would be put to it to find the material required for the sacramental signa of daisy chains & ~~[illegible]~~ floral crowns of any sort and the ~~[illegible]~~ the Queen of the Groves, no less than any other sacral award-giver, cannot function without what the earth yields - such offerands can do no more than make ~~[illegible]~~ petitions 'spiritually' 'mentally' with words maybe, as ~~[illegible]~~ essential protestant belief ~~[illegible]~~ maintains, in direct contradiction to what is crucial & central to the Catholic faith and which does but ratify & set Her seal to what 'man' qua man conscious ~~or~~ unconscious holds.

I had n't looked at I.P. for some long time & so was surprised that Major Lillywhite was decidly unpopular with us from our first billets in the soggy ~~fields~~ fields somewhere in the neighbourhood of St Omer, (the H.Q of British Forces in France) –

I.P. page 15 – poor Lillywhite is already 'that shit Major Lillywhite' and remained so until he had the death stroke in Mametz Wood, ~~[illegible]~~ but for whom the 'Queen of the Woods' found worthy of a daisy chain – and ~~[illegible]~~ Her awarding is not to be questioned.

The odd thing is that I cannot recall ~~who Lillywhite~~ who it was that the name Lillywhite disguises – but usually in I.P. ~~I met any~~ apart from the change of name, I have in mind two, or sometimes three, ~~characters~~ persons, mixing some of the characteristics of one with something typical of the others. But in the case of Lillywhite I can't recall a Major of whom we had so persistent a dislike. I think I must have accidentally heard from ~~[illegible]~~ some men of anoth unit ~~[illegible]~~ mention a Major Lillywhite & then ~~[illegible]~~ recalled the qualities of certain officers of my own unit & fused these dislikable qualities – anyway I cant sort it out now.

In yr letter of 15-9-74 You say that you have sorted out the matter of the lost Eagles but ~~you~~ I'm a little puzzled because there when the Eagles lost ~~in the~~ in B.C. 53 at the disaster of Carrhae in Mesopotamia, when the ~~Parthians~~ Partheans defeated as you say Marcus Licinius Crassus. But I thought we were concerned with the eagles lost in ~~the~~ Germany in the ~~Teutoburg~~ the Saltus Teutoburgiensis where Varus ~~[illegible]~~ & his ~~Legions~~ Legions were trapped by the German leader Arminius I think around ~~the~~ AD 9. , but were recovered later.

~~At~~ bottom of page 185 The Ave you say 'In the seven hundred & eighty-third year of the Urbs the Mother, fourteen years since the recovery of the Eagles (page 186) forty-two come the 7th before the Ides of July since they decreed

Peace in our time

the whole world exhausted of war

;

Tiberius ~~Claudius~~ Nero Caesar

voted the tribune's powers for the fourth

twenty-five years since. his fourth ~~year~~ term consul nine years gone.

Knowing that my arithmatic can be hopelessly out. I meant the '14 years since the recovery of the eagles' to refer to the recovery of the eagles lost by Varus in the Teutoburg Forest. Again the ~~[illegible]~~ the AVC. 783 may be wrong as may be the twenty-five since ~~Tiberius~~ Tiberius ~~Caesar~~ Claudius Nero Caesar was first voted the tribune's power & his fourth term consul nine years gone — but the succession of ~~[illegible]~~ tribune of being voted tribune & ~~[illegible]~~ his fourth term as consul is I think right or was when I was making the stuff in the 1940s — I mean I was then in a position to consult the required reference books. Here I have to rely on memory.

5

Thanks for confirming my thing about bitterns having their habitat in fen land & such like places. I did at the time of writing that part consult somewhat casually a little book I had on birds in Britain ~~that~~ & was glad to find that bitterns do tend to nest in reedy places but my real reason was to be sure that I could use 'bitterns' low aery' because of the association of 'aery' with high places where eagles nest. — so 'low aery' took on something of a similar feeling as 'lives gone with men' only in the case of the bit in I.P. p 54 "the kite & the crow dare condescend to dig in"

I think I said in my letter that bitterns ~~are~~ found in Wales, as they might well be in marshy places where the sea makes wide estuaries, such as Traeth Mawr, but I think I may have been confusing bitterns with buzzards or bustards which are common in some parts of Wales (the Welsh for buzzard is bwncath the second element means 'cat', bwn I'm not sure of but ~~bittern~~ 'bittern' is ~~bwn y gors~~ bwn y gors

& cors or gors ~~mean~~ means a bog in the sense of a peat-bog. I once in 1913 went to paint with an art school friend to Tregaron where there is a large ~~bog~~ peat-bog — reddish-brown & the cottages round about all used peat cut like bricks from the gors y Garon it looked just like the peat-bogs of Ireland.

There are all sorts of things I wanted to say, but can't remember what they were.

Mme Luce Bonnerot (Louis B widow) came yesterday with her elder son. She told me that Louis had read the article on I.P. in that work Les Poètes-Combattants Anglais de la Grande Guerre publish by ~~Toulouse~~ the University of Toulouse-le Mirail which I was pleased to hear, & it had come out shortly before Louis died. She was going to write to M. Roland Bouyssou to say how pleased I was to be sent a copy of it — as I had not got round to writing to thank him. I see that the copy he sent me is of a limited edition of 300 copies mine is Exemplaire No 14 — so I wonder if it will be possible for M. Bouyssou to send you a copy unless there is an edition unnumbered. I simply don't know.

I gave Luce Bonnerot the address of the New Blackfriars for she very much wanted to know what you had written — I would have given her the copy you kindly sent me, but could not part with that as it is the only copy I have — & want to ~~[illegible]~~ have it by me to re-read.

I cannot find the words to express my gratitude for all the work you've put into ~~[illegible]~~ your commentary on Rite and Foretime, Middle Sea & Lear Sea and Angle-Land. ~~My only fear is that~~ my fear is that of length. You most kindly express some concern lest I should ~~have~~ find it difficult to deal with the many questions as they arise. ~~Well, there is only one reason for me thinking that if the no question of time, then [illegible] no question of time [illegible] could I work [illegible] more quickly & also not meander so far from points raised there would be difficulty, [illegible] and you know how much I am [illegible] gratified by your most illuminating commentary & love & greatly respect all you say though as I think I said in previous letter, I think the reader may suppose that I am far more versed in the Greek & Latin classics than I am. whereas to put it mildly I have only an extremely chancy acquaintance of bits of those great deposits.~~

~~Of the 'Celtic' material I have a bit more, — for obvious reasons [illegible] even then. though English translations but with a feeling of identity touching 'the Welshry' — after all I had read~~

See sheet ⑦

~~and, of course, as I have said elsewhere, I decided that I was of my father's nation at the age of seven & listened to the singing of Welsh songs — in clear North Welsh pronunciation.~~

There is only one ~~[illegible]~~ thing that I worry about a bit, and it is purely a question of time. You know how much I am grateful that you should take all this care to elucidate this stuff of mine & I could go on ~~with~~ pleasure with great pleasure days to answer any questions that you may raise — or where I may be of any use — There is only this time thing.

— I must somehow get on with that *Kensington Mass* poem, a brief fragment of which ~~[illegible]~~ was printed in ~~Agenda~~ this last issue of *Agenda* — the *Agenda* with the *Drystan ac Esyllt* water colour on the cover it was brought out to coincide with the Faber *Sleeping Lord & other Fragments*, in April. ~~&~~ William Cookson explained in a note that it was a draft subject ~~throughout~~ to revision and but says 'we hope to publish the whole poem as soon as it is finished as an Agenda Edition late this year' (meaning this autumn). I had to tell him that it was pretty certain ~~not to~~ for the piece not to be anywhere near 'finished' but at the earliest at some date in the spring of 1975. Were it an 'article' of sorts one could ~~say~~ state ~~that it~~ roughly that it would be ready by such & such a date, but with a so called 'poem' it was impossible, or anyway impossible for me, owing to the particular way I try to make things, — to give an approximate date. William C. understands this perfectly — but I must get down to make *an attempt* to continue this *Kensington Mass* — it may be much longer than I first thought. As a matter of fact I made a thing sometime in the 1940s that was typed & was going to be broadcast on the 3rd, Pr but ~~it~~ ~~did not~~ had not the thing I wanted and so was never broadcast. but I had a copy of the typescript which would come in a help in places for this quite different & new piece

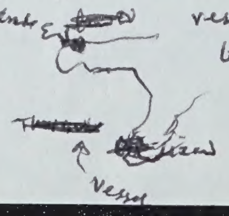
but I can't find it in my chaos of papers, except
a couple of torn fragments – anyway this new work
has ~~[illegible]~~ meandered off into a quite different shape
& I fear will be much longer. But I must
get a bit more of it made.

I do hope to God my telling you of this
won't stop you asking me questions concerning
your truly magnificent & arduous work
you are making for 'the Welsh' – but shall both
have to try & make the points & questions
as precise as possible. I am the greater
meanderer of the two of us.

As you say & as I think I said a bit back
we forget what question has already been
dealt with, & our letters cross in post.
With this letter I enclose an earlier one
marked Letter 1. Yesterday I reread yr
fascinating letter or fragments of letters
the three lines at bottom of page 107 of The Ana
'Drove of world-wind, sun's obedient daughter/
Horse dun or white wave mother / horse of better
son of wave'
are all right strictly correct 'scientifically'
but also echo some line in an early Welsh
thing

One thing (page 105 Ana)
[illegible] 'marines' was meant to allude
not the adjective marine, but to
Marines in our modern army sense
soldiers who serve on ships.
The Royal Marines.

Also I think an ~~[illegible]~~ apology
for me was necessary (page 107)
about stands in towards Belerion
for I think the expression 'to stand in'
means that the vessel is definitely
set toward a given place & as
the ~~[illegible]~~ of Belerion was round the
further isthmus of Cornwall the
vessel could not be said to
be 'standing in for' Landsend.



Must absolutely stop
or letter cannot be
posted with love Dai